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U. S. Department of Agriculture

Housekeepers' Chat

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "The 1934 Farm Kitchen" Approved by Bureau of Home Economics,
U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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"The kitchen," says a popular writer, "is the Cinderella of the American home," magically transformed from a drab workshop into a shining, enameled laboratory.

The most conspicuous characteristic of the early American kitchen, she continues, was its size. "Whether in New England, Louisiana, or California, none of the colonists stinted on that room. . . There was more than one reason for this. In the first place, the preparation of meals was not the simple task it is today. Calories and vitamins had not yet balanced diets; people ate much more; small families were not fashionable. As a result, the preparation of food was an enormous task, requiring much time and space.

"Kitchens were also bathrooms in those days. . . and kitchens saw hectic Saturday nights when a tin tub was placed in the center of the room, great kettles of water put on to boil, and the members of the large family waited their turns to be immersed in order that they might worship in cleanliness the following day."

Well, there may be a pretty sentiment connected with the days of huge kitchens, and no doubt they were the scenes of many cheerful family gatherings--other times besides Saturday nights.

But I shed no tears over the passing of the old-time kitchen. The modern, up-to-date "shining, enameled laboratory" is good enough for me; such a kitchen as Maude Wilson describes in her plans for Oregon farmhouses. Miss Wilson is with the Agricultural Experiment Station of the Oregon State College at Corvallis. She has written a bulletin describing farm homes for the Willamette Valley section of the State. However, we can't all build our homes in Oregon. Some of us will have to be content with borrowing Miss Wilson's good ideas -- particularly her ideas about farm kitchens.

"The best plan for the Willamette Valley farmhouse," says Miss Wilson, "seems to be to confine the use of the kitchen to the preparation of meals, to canning (except that done on a large scale), to the service of every-day meals, and to the storage of opened packages of food materials. Under this plan an auxiliary work area and a food-storage room are provided supplementary to the kitchen itself. . . The kitchen can be smaller and more attractive if much of the 'dirty work' is banished. . ."

I wish I could show you Miss Wilson's plans for modern farm kitchens, so that you could see for yourself how efficiently she has arranged sink and

serving center, cooler or refrigerator, and cupboards. One of her plans includes a narrow cupboard, reaching clear from the floor to the ceiling, with hooks on the sides for large articles, and a utensil cupboard, divided vertically to form slots for holding lids, pie tins, and shallow pans. Now there's an idea that will appeal to any homemaker who has done office work. If there's a handy man about the place, perhaps he can build a utensil cupboard with slots -- even though it's not for a brand new kitchen. Then you can file away lids, pie tins, and shallow pans, just as neatly as correspondence is filed in a regular office cabinet.

Among other desirable arrangements for kitchens Miss Wilson suggests drawers coated on the inside with paraffin, and sectioned to provide bin space for cereals purchased in five-pound or ten-pound lots; wall space large enough for a combination wood and electric or gas stove, together with standing room at the sides of the stove. And -- this is important -- the space for the stove should be sufficient to permit setting the stove away from the wall, for cleaning purposes. Near the stove, in the model farm kitchen, there should be a place large enough to hold a day's supply of fuel.

The kitchen sink needs compartments which permit washing and draining dishes without the use of pans, and above the sink there should be a shallow cupboard for drinking glasses, cleaning powders, hand lotion, and so forth. Be sure there's a stool to use at the sink, and a stepping stool just high enough to allow you to reach high shelves. (The kitchen's no place for stretching and bending exercises).

It may surprise you to find out that all storage spaces in plans for these farm kitchens are closed. Some of us would choose open cupboards, but practically all the homemakers of the Willamette Valley preferred closed cupboards. They wanted as attractive kitchens as possible, and they did not want to spend time in keeping shelves straightened or utensils shining, nor did they want to spend money on sets of uniform containers for supplies.

Now let's take a look at the plans for the "auxiliary work area," equipped for home laundering, ironing, canning, packing eggs, making soap, dressing poultry for the market, separating milk, washing milk utensils, setting incubators, and many other tasks that take up the time of the farm homemaker.

According to Miss Wilson, the first floor is probably the most satisfactory location for this work area, but the basement has advantages too. For one thing, a basement work area is likely to be out of sight of driveway and living rooms.

What do the farm women of the Willamette Valley want in their work areas? To begin with, an insulated and ventilated room for canned products and preserved foods. They want plenty of light to work by, a floor impervious to water and easily cleaned, room for a big work table near the sink and the stove, basement walls waterproofed and kept whitewashed, and stairs that are easy to climb.

For use during the rainy season, in drying the wash, they want a cabinet provided with some means of forcing the circulation of warmed air. They'd like to have chutes and lifts provided wherever possible, to do away with carrying equipment and supplies. Of course they prefer driveways planned so that heavy articles can be brought to the entrance of the auxiliary work area in wheelbarrow or truck.

These farm homemakers of the Willamette Valley have decided ideas about dining rooms, too, and bedrooms and bathrooms. Some day soon I want to tell you about their modern dining rooms, and perhaps we can have a typical Oregon dinner menu.

